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ABSTRACT

The focus of this paper is on how children use print, or literate language, in school and how teachers can respond and work with children. Beginning with a literature review, the paper discusses language use and literate language development in young children, pointing out that children construct their experiences through using language, and that the uses of literate language are different from those of oral language. The paper then explores three areas--reading aloud/reading, children's narratives, and children's writing--and tells how aspects of language development, characteristics of literate language use, and literary development can be planned, observed, and recorded as they happen in classroom settings. (EL)

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"I Like the Long Name"
Young Children Using Literate Language

by Richard Van Dongen

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"I Like the Long Name"
Young Children Using Literate Language

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Young children use written language for many purposes in many observable settings in a classroom. Teachers who record their observations have rich sources for the reflection necessary in order to understand children's literacy development. Such reflections can influence classroom practice so that children can grow even more in their understanding and uses of reading and writing. Currently, there is a body of literature about teaching written mainly by teachers which demonstrates the power of using journals, anecdotal records or narratives to make sense out of what children are doing and why they are doing it in order to learn about their world (Devaney, 1985; Hull, 1978; Kohl, 1984; Lampert, 1985; Seletsky, 1985; Strieb, 1985; and Winchell, 1975). The teachers in these writings are students of teaching; they have found ways in which to study children. Marie Hughes says, "If they learn to study children, THEN they can study their own responses to children, to have their own ways of working" (Martin, 1979, p. 4).

I have collaborated with a number of teachers who are studying young children's literacy development. We together have recorded observations, reflected upon them and have written about them (Brissey, 1982; Collins, 1984; Hall, 1985; Henrickson, 1984; and Van Dongen, 1984) in order to discover how children are using print, or literate language, in the context of schooling and how we as teachers can respond and work with children. In addition we have studied ideas about children's language use and literate language and have used these ideas to focus our observations, discussions and writing. I am sharing these teachers' experiences and their personal/professional discoveries in order to encourage all of us to apply observation, recording, study/reading, reflection/discussion and writing so that we too continue to develop many more of our own ways of working effectively with children.

Language use and literate language development. We have studied literate language development from the view that children use language for purposes. Halliday (1981) describes three facets of language development which all occur simultaneously. Every time learners use language, they are (1) learning language, (2) learning through language and (3) learning more about language. This is true for written as well as oral language. Children use literate language for learning; they learn through literate language. But while they learn through literate language, they also are learning more literate language and more about literate language.

Literate language has intentions (function) as well as conventions (form). Children use written language in reading and writing for a function and grapple with conventions in order to succeed in their intent. Researchers and theorists have categorized uses of language (Smith, 1982), types of uses of reading and writing (Heath, 1983)

and domains of literacy activity (Anderson and Stokes, 1984) as found in general human activity, communities and families. An understanding of these types of uses aids us in bringing meaning to bear upon what we see children are doing or what they might attempt to do when using literate language.

Children construct their experiences of the world through using language; they are meaning makers. As they make sense out of the representations of their world, they also construct a representation of language (Wells, 1986). They progressively construct a representation leading to full control of all facets of language, including using literate language to learn. Studies (Bissex, 1980 and Carini, 1982) show us how children move towards adult thinking and uses of language. The children are repeatedly seen working on aspects of language or thought as they get more possibilities of use under control. Such studies provided a context for a kindergarten teacher to understand her own three-year-old son's use of written language as they traveled to and from a day care center each morning and evening. The three year old recognized a logo (a red circle surrounding a red "k") and a name (Circle K) as a store that they sometimes stopped at to get a snack. Junick (1982) kept a number of observational notes of his recognition and use of written language in his community environment. He began to say "mirkle K" as they passed the particular Circle K store. She began to view this response as one of language use to get food, and one of working to get certain conventions of language under control. "Mirkle K" is not an inaccurate response to print; it is active practice progressing towards further control of the conventions of the writing system.

A description of literate language also helped us focus our observations and study. Westby (1984) describes a continuum with orality or face-to-face communication at one end and literacy or formal written language at the other. "Along this continuum language differs in terms of its (a) function (or why people talk), (b) its topic (or what people talk about) and (c) its structure (or how people talk about the topics)" (Westby, 1985, p. 185). Language becomes progressively more decontextualized, abstract and complex as one moves away from orality toward literacy.

Literate language is used to regulate thinking/planning, to reflect and seek information and to learn or teach. This contrasts with oral language which is used to regulate social interaction, to request and command and to communicate. The topics of oral language use are more likely to be of the every day and the familiar; topics of literate language use tend to be the more abstract or unfamiliar. Topics in oral language use are topic-associated. Two speakers in oral conversation may jump from one topic to another, but some connection or event in the conversation triggers the next topic. In literate language, topics are topic-centered. A written treatise demands all thoughts to be organized and to contribute to the topic. Meanings are in the context of an oral language topic, but in the written text meaning is drawn from inferences and conclusions about the text. The structure of familiar words, repetitive syntax and ideas, pronouns, slang, jargon and cohesion based on intonation characterize oral language use. Unfamiliar words, concise syntax and ideas, specific vocabulary and cohesion based on formal linguistic markers (because, so, therefore, etc.) characterize

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written language use. As children encounter written language, they build sense out of these differences in function, topic and structure, and their own uses of written language will take on these more literate qualities.

Children's literary development is part of their literacy development. Even though most of literate language use in daily living may not include literature, literate language is also the language of literature and literary form. Literate language is used to get things done, the language of transaction (Britton, 1975); it is also the substance from which "flax-golden tales" are spun (Silverstein, 1974, p. 9), imaginative story. The literary development of language learners through imaginative story, poems and drama is a necessary ingredient in order for humans to develop some power over their lives. Literary development connects us with the powerful images and dreams of the past, illuminates the present and enhances the images of the future.

I have explored with these teachers mentioned in this article contexts in which children are engaged in using literate language to learn and at the same time are building further representations of language. Settings where aspects of language development, characteristics of literate language use and literary development all occur can be planned, observed and recorded as they happen in classrooms. We have explored three areas: reading aloud/reading, children's narratives and children's writing.

Reading aloud/reading. Literature which is read aloud to children must first and foremost be for the purpose and enjoyment and stimulation of the imagination. In addition, or perhaps part of that enjoyment and imagination, children are simultaneously actively engaged in using literate language to learn, learning more literate language and learning more about how literate language is structured. As children experience story through stories read aloud to them, they are discovering "one of the chief functions of reading and writing--that of conveying stories" (Wells, 1986, p. 200). Also children have opportunities to use literary representations of experience in building their own experiences and at the same time learn more about literary form. Wells (1986) states, "But in listening to stories read aloud they not only extend the range of experience they are able to understand, but also begin to assimilate the more powerful and more abstract mode of representing experience that is made available by written language" (p. 200). He also suggests that children may find many meaningful uses for reading and writing in the classroom (organizing routines, animal feeding schedules, corresponding with parents, etc.), but that for the "majority of children it will be stories that assume the greatest importance" (p. 201) for using literate language.

The teacher, librarian, parent or other significant adult can observe children engaged with literate language during the stories they read aloud to children. Some books seem to invite children to chime in when a repetitive pattern or language phrase occurs over and over. Other books are so structured that predicting and chanting almost naturally seem to happen. Rhymes, verses and ballads might be chanted or sung together. The flow of the rhythm and sound of language when sustained by several voices supports children using literate language that they might not be able to control on their own. A variety of

fiction and non-fiction is important so that children experience many different possibilities in how literate language is shaped. Concept, ABC and counting books are important as well. Poetry may have particular importance because playing with the sound and rhythm of words is detected in the language of the very young (Winner, 1982).

Not only can adults plan opportunities for children to become engaged with literate language, but they can observe the responses children make to literate language as they build representations of experience through story, literary structure and language. Some of these observations and interpretations of what they might mean based on study and collaboration with others are shared by a group of teachers in this article who have collected children's responses, reflected on them, studied them and written about them.

Durant (1979) observed different response patterns to different kinds of texts. She observed these different response interactions while reading to her two-year-old son. The ABC, counting or concept books evoked questions, pointing and repeating words or labels, while narrative stories evoked a settling in and listening with an occasional chuckle, or chiming in with a sound or rhythmic language pattern. This early recognition of certain forms of literate language suggests that very young children who are engaged with literate language are sorting out the possibilities. The diversity in literate language form is a significant ingredient to plan for when reading aloud to young children and when collecting observations of their responses over time.

How do such young children use literate language and get it under control in their daily lives? One observable, fascinating way is through noticing their use of literate language in their daily lives. Wittrup (1983) observed and recorded responses of her two-year-old grandson over many shared sessions of reading aloud stories. In this setting, two people, very special to each other, read, listened, laughed and played with literate language as well as story. This literate language spilled over into the child's social setting where he displayed control of this language of literature:

> *The table conversation turns to cats and he states: "I like cats. Brown cats, black cats, blue cats . . ." He learned this pattern from Margaret Wise Brown's The Friendly Book.*
>
> *He has a spray bottle that he loves to play with. Elephant in Trouble is a small waterproof book that concerns a small elephant named Marvin who likes to spray adults and ends up sprayed himself. He (the two year old) often refers to himself as "Marv."*
>
> *A construction site with cranes becomes a "Crash! Bang! Boom! place" (Peter Spier's Crash! Bang! Boom!).*

The careful, long-term studies of Butler (1980), Crago and Crago (1983) and White (1984) provide many more such examples of children using the literate language of story in their daily lives.

During their studies, both Durant and Wittrup experienced the great joy of watching the two year olds attempt to gain control of the literate text in another way. The children interrupted the reader and took over the reading of the text. One grasped the book and repeated the patterns of the cumulative tale,

carefully correlating the action of the literate language with the appropriate page. The other "always got the final words on the pages exactly correct and followed them with a flourish of the hand as he turned the page" (Wittrup, 1983).

What aspects of story and literate language are five year olds noticing when stories are read aloud to them in their kindergarten classroom? Collins (1983) recorded children's responses when they were asked which books were their favorites and why they liked them. The children's interests centered around the many books which she had read aloud to them. She categorized their responses by character, plot, point of view, setting, mood, language, style and illustration. By far the most frequent responses centered around the character:

Child 1: I like it when Harry is a black dog with white spots.

Child 2: I like the troll. There was a big billy goat, a middle-sized billy goat and a little billy goat.

and mood--specifically funny stories:

Child 1: It's silly, too.

Child 2: It's funny. The animals are funny in the book.

Child 3: It's funny. The hats are silly.

She also examined those responses which she categorized as responses to language. These responses show children gaining control of the use and understanding of literate language:

Child 1: She goes "Tee-hee-hee." I like the way she laughs.

Child 2: I like the long name.

Child 3: The wild things say, "Don't go! Don't go!"

Child 4: It rhymes.

All of these responses involve children responding to how literate language is used, and they are incorporating their observations into their own representations of literate language.

We analyzed some of these responses in further detail including the social context in which they occurred. Our observations, reflections, study of language development and knowledge of story all helped to increase our understanding of the children's language as they built insights about written language. Insights into the child's response, "I like the long name," grew out of such a context. The teacher began reading aloud a story to the group of children by holding up the front cover and sharing the title. As soon as "Tikki Tikki Tembo" (Mosel, 1968) was uttered, one child announced, "I like the long name." Another joined in, "I can say the name." The children are noticing the literary structure of a title for a story, and they are responding to the use of literate language to name something. The children are attuned to some of the possibilities of written language which a writer controls such as combinations of sound, rhythm, visual length and directness or indirectness of meanings. These two children seem to be constructing knowledge about length, rhythm, sound and function of naming something. They are using language to learn more about language.

In addition, every child in the classroom had an opportunity to conduct a book survey:

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Each day the children were asked to choose their favorite between two books which had previously been read at storytime. The child doing the survey wrote down the names of all of the children choosing each book, then totaled them up and announced the results to the class.

The importance of the survey is captured in the work of Vandergrift (1980, p. 183): "It is only through comparison that children can begin to make critical evaluations." Through questions about books and surveys of these books, Collins found five year olds clearly on their way to making critical literary evaluations and using literate language.

What can teachers observe of the responses of six-year-old children to the stories they read aloud to them? Brissey (1981, 1982) read aloud fifteen books at least three times each to small groups of children over a three-month period. She systematically recorded children's responses during the sessions. She supported their responses to her and to each other by pausing in the story, but she never broke out of the mode of storyteller to respond individually or personally to the children. After their responses, without comment she simply continued the flow of the story. She found children responding across eleven categories: (1) responses to text, (2) responses to story structure, (3) specifically directed communication, (4) responses to illustration, (5) non-word responses, (6) the offering of personal knowledge and experience, (7) creative language, (8) stating pleasure or displeasure with the book, (9) responding to title page information, (10) comments about physical features of the book and (11) supplying "The End."

Brissey's observational data is powerful in describing the impact of frequent revisits with the same books through reading aloud. The children worked to shape the text and make sense of the author's use of words. This led to the following discussion during the third session over a period of time in reading the same book, <u>One Was Johnny</u> (Sendak, 1962):

A persistent response through the sessions was questioning of the meaning of "10 was a puzzle. What should Johnny do?"

The children looked repeatedly for an actual puzzle in the illustration, even after some had explained it as meaning a conflict or dilemma for Johnny.

Child 1: Where's the puzzle?

Child 2: You don't see it.

Child 1: Where's the puzzle? I don't see any puzzle.

Child 2: No! Puzzle. . .puzzled up! You don't know what to do with everything.

Child 1: Where's the puzzle?

Child 2: That <u>is</u> the puzzle!

Child 3: The whole thing's a puzzle, right?

(Brissey, 1981, p. 86).

Such intense involvement in making sense of literate language sustained over time contributes to the development of deeper meanings about literature and the possibilities of literate language.

The children's interest in the character and setting of <u>One Was Johnny</u> alsc grew:

During the first session there were several comments about the story

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setting. During the third session, questions about Johnny living by himself emerged:

Child 1: Didn't he have any parents?

Child 2: Nope.

Child 3: He's probably a teenager that looks like a kid.

Child 1: That's crazy!

The children are using the tools of literary criticism, here the literary elements of character and setting, to make sense of the creative work as well as to make sense of how this author uses literate language.

These studies and descriptions of reading aloud to young children celebrate young children's responses to story and provide insights into their literary development and literacy development. The children actively interact with the literate language forms, interact with others to make sense of these forms and gradually over time take control of literate language for their own use and enjoyment.

Telling narratives. One of the earliest and most accessible ways of using language to think is through narrative (Bruner, 1985); the telling of stories is a primary mode of knowing, a primary act of mind (Hardy, 1978). We make sense out of life and organize thought through the narratives we tell each other:

After school at one, at two, at three-thirty, my mom never came, and I was just waiting outside and everybody left. And I went and called and nobody was there so I just waited and later I called and my mom was there and she forgot I was at school (Maggart, Westby and Van Dongen, 1984).

This eight year old is building her experiences as she talks about this scary event in her life. The event is shaped by her use of narrative language and narrative form. She also displays control of some aspects of literate language and a sense of story. The beginning of this episode is closer to the more literate end of the oral/literate language continuum (Westby, 1985). By ordering her waiting at school, "at one, at two, at three-thirty," she builds tension and feeling. She is composing and talking like a literate story.

An eleven year old begins an oral story:

One night in a town in Washington State, the. . .this. . .there was these people up in the mountains. And they kept on hearing strange noises up in the mountains. So one day all these hunters came out to hunt down the. . .the noise. They're thinking it could be a yeti, a Big Foot (Maggart, Westby and Van Dongen, 1984).

A more literate language style is used with great control to create the mood, setting and plot. "One night in a town in Washington State" gives the story a time and place specificity; yet there is a distancing quality similar to "long ago in a country far away." "So one day" initiates the unfolding of events and the statement, "They're thinking it could be a yeti, a Big Foot," is a literate language style using the device of repetition through synonyms in order to build tension and an image: "a yeti, a Big Foot."

Both stories from personal experience and stories of the imagination promote the use of literate language as a way to think. Insights into ourselves and into the social

being that humans must become emerge through narrative language opportunities. The personal stories probably have more characteristics of oral language while the imaginative stories probably have more characteristics of literate language style. Yet, in all narratives that children tell, they have opportunities to practice some aspects of literate language style. The eight year old who was left at school shaped her personal life event with the story organization and language of a literate narrative.

A move from more oral language to that of taking on aspects of more literate language and literate narratives can be studied through the narratives children tell (Maggart, Westby and Van Dongen, 1984). This transitional nature of narratives from the more oral to the more literate is possible to nurture in a range of classroom activities. This promotes a variety of narrative thinking, and it seems to be of great value in taking on reading and writing (Wells, 1986; Meek, 1982).

Narratives can be promoted in a variety of ways. In our ongoing study (Maggart, Westby and Van Dongen, 1984) children are asked to tell a story, like the kind you write down, about a wordless picture book, a poster scene and something scary that has happened. The stories are video and audio recorded and then transcribed for a variety of analyses. Although these requests of the children to tell a story are somewhat artificial, the children do respond in narrative language and use a variety of forms of literate language. All three of these types of stories could be woven into the ongoing life of classrooms. Even some stories could be tape recorded and studied further for understanding how children develop control of literate language.

Wordless picture books are popular and are found in many young children's classrooms. During the interaction and sharing, it is quite natural to invite, "Could you tell the story like it would be written down?" The episodic nature of the illustrations provides the story line support for the child who, with this support, can begin to elaborate and imagine the story through literate language. Poster scenes can be the focus for a group telling a story to go with the poster or for one child to tell a story. Personal stories abound in classrooms and are part of ongoing social life. Such stories should be heeded, and significant peers and adults should listen to them. In these stories children are building their experiences through narrative thought and are using a more literate language style. Teachers' awareness of the values of narrative thought and the use of literate language will help to value sharing stories which at times seem to be off the subject and time consuming. Meek (1982) pleads for adults to listen to children's stories about their lives. Here is the clay which will be shaped by the child in a social setting into the structures of literary understandings and appreciations.

Stories which are recorded and/or transcribed in written form provide opportunities to observe and reflect upon how children use literate language with varying degrees of control. These children are using language of a literate style:

Child 1: It was 1955 and everybody was in their house, all snuggled up tight.

Child 2: The bird twitched and fell

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right off the Voodoo's head.

Child 3: . . .a swimming pool that was shaped like a triangle form.

Children organize their narratives in story forms which can be analyzed by applying the three different analysis systems adapted by Peterson and McCabe (1983). The classic narrative is a form of many children's stories:

. . .There were two little boys that were caught in Egypt. And they were prisoners. And they wanted to get out, get out of it. And they and they kept on trying to escape, but they couldn't because they kept on. . .the guards. . .there were guards in there. They kept on trying to. . .they kept on trying to escape, and the guards always got em back and punished them for it. And all of a sudden. And once a big white bird flew down. And they got on. And then they started flying off. And the guards didn't even know until they were real far up. And the guards they found out. . . and the they (boys) went, got back home. And their mom was so happy to see them again. And they were just and they were real glad to get home (Maggart, Westby and Van Dongen, 1984).

This nine year old is telling a classic form of narrative. She has begun the story with a problem which leads to a highpoint. She builds to the highpoint and draws out the tension. Finally the problem is solved with a satisfying conclusion of feelings of warmth and safety. Even though Beatrix Potter's literary Peter Rabbit is more carefully shaped as a classic narrative, this child's story has the same necessary ingredients. Furthermore, these ingredients are competently handled.

Another analysis illuminates how children control attributes of story form. An eight year old begins a story:

This is about China. My father lived in China. This is a folktale about the Chinese. Once upon a time there was two boys. One's name was Pac Ta and one's name was Sai Ya (Maggart, Westby and Van Dongen, 1984).

This child uses literate language to create a prologue for the story which is part of the tradition of storytellers down through the ages and across many cultures. Several orientation attributes create setting and characters before any complicating actions lead to a highpoint. The analyses of the events shaped in this prologue begin to provide us a picture as to how this child uses literate language to create narratives.

Children draw upon their sense of story and their control of literate language when they tell stories from personal experience and from imagination. Such storytelling is a rich activity for studies and observations of children's language and thought development. Language in narrative form is an ongoing dimension of classroom life and becomes valued by us when we are aware of children's use of narrative for thinking and learning, for reading and writing and for literary appreciation of a story.

Writing. Young children's writing vividly portrays Halliday's three aspects of language development: learning language, learning through language and learning more about language. Children capture understandings about experience, imagine through story and develop control of literate language and the features of written language.

Hall (1984) documents one five year old's intricate uses of literate language on all fronts of development:

> *J__ wanted me to write "The Three Billy Goats Gruff" on the chalk board for him to copy. Since other children were using the board, I suggested we write it all in the dictionary under "T" and it would be there as long as he needed it. That was fine and he continued to use it.*
>
> *J__ also wrote WOS A PANA TIM (Once upon a time) and by J__ on the first page. He drew a picture on the second and labeled it: THE BILLY GOATS IS GOWN TO NAK HIM TO THE TROL IN WATR (The billy goats is going to knock the troll into the water). On the next page he drew a picture and labeled it: THE BILLY GOAT IS GOWN OVR THE BRIT (The Billy Goat is going over the bridge). HE IS GOWN TOO ETHM ALL UP (He is going to eat them all up). He drew a picture on the next page and labeled it: TR GOWNTO ET THE GRA BUT TIR WAS A BRIT AND TA HD TO GO ACRS (They're going to eat the grass but there was a bridge and they had to go across).*

This five year old is working with story and making sense of literate language and literate form. At the same time that he is doing this, he is learning more language, such as troll and billy goat. He is also learning more about how literate language works and is getting control of literate language conventions of spelling and form.

Hall's kindergarten class engages in all kinds of writing. Sometimes it might involve dictating stories from pictures or events in children's lives. Sometimes they record ongoing events. Sometimes children focus on the conventions of language. This is seen in children who copy down any writing they can find; others play with names and alphabets or create invented spellings. At times these children spend long periods of sustained time on these conventions because of the intense challenge for control which will free them to create more literate meanings and language.

Fowler (1983) used community resources to provide meaningful purposes for reading and writing. She insightfully orchestrated and documented an event which produced tremendous interest in the children to use literate language. Her community's veterinarian offered her kindergarten class a zebra finch:

> *We hung the bird's cage in a section of the classroom that had no particular use. That very instant, literacy began to flourish.*
>
> *WHAT CAN WE NAME OUR ZEBRA FINCH?*
>
> *Children wrote or dictated names.*
>
> *THIS LED TO GRAPHING*
>
> *Children listed their name under their favorite name of the four final choices.*
>
> *WHICH THEN LED TO A NAME CARD FOR TWEETY BIRD*
> *WHICH THEN LED TO THE COPYING OF HIS NAME CARD*
> *WHICH LED TO THE DISCOVERY OF HIS INITIALS*
> *WHICH THEN LED TO LABELING HIS SUPPLY CONTAINER*
> *WHICH THEN LED TO EVERYONE WANTING TO HELP FEED HIM*
> *WHICH THEN LED TO PLACING BOOKS ABOUT BIRDS ON THE ADJOINING WORK TABLE*
> *WHICH LED TO STUDENT BOOKS ABOUT TWEETY BIRD*
> *WHICH LED TO SOMEONE THINKING OF SENDING A THANK YOU NOTE TO THE VETERINARIAN.*

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The children in this classroom experienced and developed control over a wide range of purposes and uses of literate language as this teacher responded to the children each time with new possibilities.

Some time after we had documented these events and had reflected about the children's uses of literate language, further developments continued to be extended through language. Tweety Bird received a mate, who was named Sweety Bird. The children recorded events and sought out more information when the birds nested and began to set on a single egg. What could have been a complete disaster in one sense was recorded and documented in a class book. One day when Esta Fowler, the teacher, was out of school, the cage fell over. The egg broke, and the two birds escaped. The team teaching staff turned the event into a record that could be shared with Esta when she returned the next day. The class book presented to her the next day was entitled: "You wouldn't Believe What Happened Yesterday. . ." Each child recorded the event and illustrated it on an individual page. Examples are:

Child 1: *The cage fell over. The egg cracked. Sandee was finally able to catch the birds. It was a hard job!*

Child 2: *The cage broke. The birds came out and didn't want to go back in when the cage was fixed again.*

The children's dictated language along with their illustrations provided a permanent record of this event which was shared over and over with their teacher.

Near the end of the year, Esta visited me. She handed me a folder of writing which was entitled: "To Kindergarten, From 5th Graders--In Memory of Two Special Friends. . ." Esta said she could hardly talk about it. The two birds died somewhat suddenly within a day of each other. Fifth graders who frequently came down to work with the kindergarten children had sensed the distress of the children and together with their teacher had sent a folder filled with sympathy notes. Their use of literate language for this purpose was a meaningful effort in their development of writing as well as their social development. Examples are:

Child 1: *Dear Kindergarten,*
I'm very sorry for your finches deaths. Tweety and Sweety were really nice birds.
K_____

Child 2: *I am sorry to hear about Sweety and Tweety. When I herd them cirping beautyfuly. I can see how you miss them.*
Sincerely,
B_____ W.

Child 3: *I'm very sorry your two finches died. I had six birds, but two of them died, one crashed into the hall wall and the other crashed into the door, and now ones sick I hope he lives.*

This kind of personal communication expressing empathy as well as sympathy was a different kind of writing use for these fifth graders. They too were extending their control over the possibilities of literate language uses.

Not only do children learn to control the functions of written language, but as they write

imaginative stories they often use their knowledge of story. Greenwood (1983) placed chart paper with the statement "What a fairy tale should have:" on a classroom wall in her second and third grade combination classroom. During the day children came by and wrote responses to the statement:

1. *a fairy word*
2. *a happy ending*
3. *a yarn*
4. *and a happy ending for everything*
5. *and a very nice ending on a weding day*
6. *a happy Christmas thing*
7. *and a very very very happy Halloween*
8. *a king and princes*
9. *a beautiful princess*
10. *black magic*
11. *gold, fairy godmother*
12. *Prinsis get mareed*

These children are sharing with each other and their teacher a great deal of knowledge about a particular genre of story. These dimensions are available to them when they create their own stories. These responses are some of the archetypes and motifs which have persisted in stories over time. The children are building this sense of story and in so doing are experiencing that literature grows out of itself. "While each work is new, it is also recognizably the same as the old" (Vandergrift, 1980, p. 215).

Young children develop control of literate language use and the conventions of literate language style in many ways. We, as sensitive teachers and observers, must collect many examples of children's uses of literate language so that through our study and reflections patterns emerge. These patterns provide us many opportunities for responding to children's use of literate language so that more literate language is learned while it is being used to learn and to express thoughts imaginatively. Reading aloud, telling narratives and writing for a variety of purposes are rich frameworks for children's use of language.

Something else should be said, however, about these settings. These are social settings in which children use literate language with each other and with their teachers or other significant adults. This social dimension provides the sustenance for sustaining long, rigorous focus on using literate language. The social dimensions of language even in written form are key for learners to develop the necessary control in order to use language as a means for thinking and imagining about the world rather than an end in itself.

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